

**Single Family Design Guidelines Update
Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance Update**

Steering Committee

**Meeting #17 Notes
December 10, 2004**

Steering Committee members: Chair Dianne Channing, Vice Chair Brian Barnwell, Joe Guzzardi, Vadim Hsu, Bill Mahan, Christine Pierron (attending for Bruce Bartlett), Helene Schneider, Richard Six.

Staff: Bettie Weiss (City Planner), Jaime Limón (Supervising Planner), Heather Baker (Project Planner), Jason Smart (Intern).

- I. Welcome and Introductions**
- II. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda**
- III. Administrative Items**
- IV. Issue Paper D Follow-Up Discussion: Floor to Lot Area Ratio Options¹**

Staff presentation was followed by public comment and Steering Committee discussion. Public comment included:

Naomi Kovacs: Presented submitted correspondence in support of required FAR's under 0.3 and required Hillside 45-day story pole periods. Also commented on need to update website links.

Susan Trescher: La Mesa Neighborhood Association representative. The Association asked for more definitive standards in the NPO 10 years ago. It is time for the City to join the rest of the South Coast in having definite directions for property owners, developers, etc. Group endorses Goleta's graduated scale. Would like a garage exclusion of no more than 400 square feet. Architects and Staff will be overburdened with complex analysis work if there is a threshold FAR and maximum FAR rather than a maximum FAR alone.

Karen Fryklund: Concerned that there is a lack of citywide input into the NPO Update process. Does not approve of some organizations purporting to speak on behalf of City residents. Would like a statistical analysis of the advocacy groups and what the majority of residents truly believe, as this is important information for decision-making. Perhaps the advocacy groups could come together and reach a compromise.

Jim Kahan: President of Allied Neighborhood Association. Allied represents 17 neighborhood associations, circulates agendas for its meetings, listens to people's objections, and has guest speakers such as City Council members. La Mesa Improvement Association supports Allied's position. Allied's organizations have not voiced any opposition to keeping FARs small. FAR is an old principle. It is surprising

¹ The public comment noted here is more detailed than regular Steering Committee notes due to the FAR topic for this meeting.

that FARs have not already been adopted in the City considering Santa Barbara's sophistication regarding design issues.

Mickie Flacks: Downtown resident. Supports FAR in an enforceable ordinance, similar to what the CPA has recommended, not because other progressive cities have FARs but because there is limitless demand for people to retire in the City, buy what they want, and build mansions. When framing housing policies, it is important to ask: Who lived there before and who will live there afterward? FARs will help preserve affordability and diversity in the City. 3,000-4,000 square-foot homes is a kind of inner-city sprawl leading inevitably to gentrification and changing the character of the community. There needs to be an exception to FAR limits for granny units because they could provide affordable housing.

Lisa Knox Burns: Upper East Side resident. Simplicity is important. David Gebhard once spoke about the City having a "villa mentality," i.e., valuing the protection of views and quality of life. The most important goal of the Update process is preserving privacy. Second stories are the real issue. Different homes can have different appropriateness despite the same FAR depending on whether there is a second story. Supports weighting second stories in FARs and requiring applicants to provide a rationale for invading neighbors' privacy with second story projects. It is more "honest" to include garages in FAR calculations, particularly on smaller lots. The 20 closest homes are not necessarily the most representative of a neighborhood; it is more important to compare a project to abutting parcels.

Cathy McCammond: League of Women Voters representative. League believes the City needs to update the NPO because it has not worked. The NPO needs teeth in order to be effective. Supports maximum FARs, with a range of FARs for different lot sizes. Supports Goleta's numbers because they have worked well there. Many jurisdictions with FARs have said they are not strict enough to protect neighborhood compatibility. FARs will ensure neighborhood compatibility and fairness, prevent conflicts between neighbors, and protect affordability. The City is rapidly becoming a place with no housing opportunities for the middle class. FARs in a two-track system will become too large because of the tendency for the maximum to become a standard over time. Maximum FARs need to be lower than the ones on p. 14 of the Floor to Lot Area Ratio Follow-Up Discussion Issue Paper. Who will determine whether to allow larger FARs, and how do we know the criteria will be applied fairly? How exactly will such criteria be determined? The sample exception design criteria listed on p. 15 are too discretionary to make the process fair. We are making things more complicated than necessary. A single, maximum FAR accounting for different lot sizes would be easier to apply and understand.

Randy Mudge: ABR member. Served on Goleta design review board before and after Goleta implemented FARs. Supports FARs in concept, but flexibility is the key to FAR implementation success because every situation is different. It is a mistake not to include parking in FAR calculations because it adds to volume, bulk and scale. The City currently has an ordinance prohibiting trash cans from being stored in side yard setbacks; this must be considered when regulating projects. 2,500 square feet or less is enough to accommodate the average 2.47 people per dwelling; the average home in the City is less than only about 1,500 square feet. The main benefit of FARs in Goleta has

been that they have limited the applications that receive repeated design review despite applicants being told to reduce square footage. Talented and hardworking applicants are hampered by FARs though; hence the importance of flexibility. We need a clear way to tell applicants how much square footage needs to be reduced. Sometimes applicants will do what is requested of them, and yet the project will still be unacceptable. Regarding 20 closest homes analysis, a home that is 1,000 to 1,500 square feet larger than its neighbors can be more than twice the size of neighboring homes if the average home size in the neighborhood is small. It would thus be more appropriate to compare neighboring homes using percentages. It would be better to regulate FARs by the nearest 100 square feet and round FARs to the nearest thousandth. Second stories can be desirable in that they preserve open space; however, can two-story homes in one-story neighborhoods ever be compatible?

Steering Committee Discussion²

Mahan: Likes the concept of threshold FARs and maximum, with a variance procedure to go beyond that in extenuating circumstances. Two routing methods as shown as types A and B makes sense.. The criteria need to be carefully reviewed, perhaps prioritized and weighted because some are more important than others. The concept of having exception criteria is good.

Barnwell: I'm still not clear about flow chart. The exception criteria listed are already evaluated by the ABR. Why can't we just have route A rather than A and B? There are other triggers that send projects to ABR too, so we need to think about the entire panoply of issues. I'm working backward in all these discussions from what I think is a livable household size to arrive at appropriate corresponding FARs. There's a good reason to include garages because they contribute mass, but I want to make sure we allow homeowner to get a 2,000-2,500 sq. ft. house, garage or not. On p.16, the idea that proposed homes should be no more than 1,000-1,500 sq. ft. bigger than neighbors seems too liberal. 1,500 square feet is a lot. The Goleta model goes in the direction I'm interested in. We've skirted around the second-story issue; we need to recognize how second stories can skew FARs' measurement of a project's appropriateness.

Schneider: Likes the threshold/max concept but the exact numbers need tweaking. Starting by doubling the database average home size as a threshold is setting us up for undesirably larger homes. Allowing for potential "granny units" is an example of one reason why flexibility is good. The burden of proof to exceed threshold needs to fall strongly on the applicant. It is not clear how the proposed two-tier application routing would contribute to ABR's workload. Garages were originally excluded because we don't want to penalize people from complying with covered parking requirements.

Guzzardi: Agree with public comments regarding "keeping it simple". The threshold/max. routing complicates the process. The community is dissatisfied with the way houses are getting bigger and bigger, so why not just have a max FAR? If there's a way to keep the two-level system simple, it could be OK. Not comfortable with the current FAR numbers. It is important to assign the numbers keeping in mind that FAR is a percentage. 2,000-2,500 sq. ft. of livable

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space seems reasonable to me. There should not be 3,000 sq. ft. homes in 6,000 sq. ft. lot neighborhoods. Regarding whether or not to include garages in the FAR calculations, it is apparently “no win” either with or without them included. We need to come up with an appropriate number, and then everything else will fall into place. I would like something close to 0.3; 0.33 is fine; 0.4 is too much; with 0.4 there would be no progress. A sliding scale to accommodate larger properties that can have larger structures is appropriate. The routing diagram is too complicated. 1,800 sq. ft. is living space is reasonable, but perhaps considering the price of real estate, it seems 1,800 sq. ft. is too restrictive.

Mahan: We must have flexibility. Threshold/max concept is important and allows for flexibility. If you have good design, you should perhaps be allowed to exceed threshold. That way we’ll have variety. The concept isn’t simple, but simplicity isn’t always the best thing. 2,200 on a 6,000 sq. ft. lot seems too big. Somewhere between there and 1,800 seems right. Perhaps 1,800 should be threshold and 2,200 maximum.

Hsu: Flexibility and discretion is always going to be the issue. There are medium-sized homes on smaller lots that need discretion. Approves of threshold/max concept. The ABR needs process in place to start variation process on right track for outstanding designs above max. If there are ways to accommodate two off-street parking spaces, maybe they should be included in the Zoning Ordinance. The issue of second-story setbacks should trigger design review earlier in the process.

Pierron: We’re addressing issues applicable to lots of less than 8,000 sq. ft, but we’re extrapolating to larger parcels. I think there are parcels that could bear higher FARs, but without an analysis of whether that is the case and how so, I don’t want to burden too many community members. Triggers should draw attention to themselves without being onerous requirements. Agree with threshold/max. idea, but the max. should be an absolute max., and the max. needs to be large. Doesn’t mind low threshold as long as max. is high in order to allow for flexibility. It might be better to exclude garages because it’s unfair to compare the same size garage to different size lots; the amount of garage space contributes differently to the FAR depending on the lot.

Six: Support threshold/max idea in order to keep things fair. I’m comfortable with the numbers for smaller lots, but I think we need to be careful about the max. We need more visual study of the mid-range lots in order to determine what is/isn’t acceptable for them. The ABR doesn’t need numeric triggers to accompany 20 closest homes analysis. Not all of the triggers should be excluded from applying beyond the threshold FAR. Simplify the routing chart to have the exception criteria box instead list items for applicant’s burden of proof. Move exception criteria to become part of the special findings for max. FAR approvals. In octagon of chart, replace exception criteria with added tools for analysis/extra noticing/story poles/20 closest homes analysis, etc.

Schneider: Add granny units to exception criteria list.

Mahan: If FAR prevents building a granny unit, that would be a time for a variance.

Channing: Is comfortable with the numbers and support the 1800 – 2200 concept. Large lots will be addressed during hillside discussion.

Motion (by Brian Barnwell): For lots under 10,000 square feet only, support creating citywide FAR standards (Option A of the Floor to Lot Area Ratio Follow-Up Discussion Issue Paper) due to the advantages listed on p. 17 of the Floor to Lot Area Ratio Follow-Up Discussion Issue Paper. Accept the FAR table on the bottom of p. 14 of the paper, (below – not yet revised), but with the following revisions and considerations:

- Refer to “recommended” FARs to “threshold” FARs. The Steering Committee supports the concept of having both threshold and maximum FARs in order to allow for more design flexibility. However, “threshold” is preferred to “recommended” to clarify that the Steering Committee does not seek to encourage project FARs to be as large as the threshold.
- Change the threshold FAR for a 6,000-square-foot lot to an 1,800-square-foot home (i.e., 0.3 FAR), and the maximum FAR for a 6,000-square-foot lot to a 2,200-square-foot home (i.e., .37 FAR). 1,800-2,200 square feet is a reasonable amount of living space, excluding garages, for most households. Revise the rest of the FAR table proportionally for lots up to 10,000 square feet, with threshold and maximum FARs decreasing as lot sizes increase, to best correspond with the revised numbers for 6,000-square-foot lots.
- Revise the table to have 100-foot increments rather than 1,000-foot increments to allow for greater precision with less complication than a “multiplier” approach.
- Exclude 450 square feet of garage space when calculating FAR, adjust chart accordingly by 50 square feet
- Allow variances as the only mechanism available for projects to exceed maximum FAR. Variances are not approved unless rigorous findings are met, allowing modifications to exceed FAR maximums would be too problematic.

Revise the FAR-based review process illustrated on p. 15 as follows:

- Rather than “exception criteria” to exceed threshold FAR’s, require “added tools for analysis” such as 20 closest homes analysis or story poles, or other additional application requirements, such as extra noticing. Require additional findings for projects approvals beyond the threshold FAR.

Second: Bill Mahan.

All in favor.

V. Adjourn until January 14th.

Issue Paper D Follow-Up Discussion p. 14 table referred to in motion, not yet revised

Does not include 400s.f. of

Lot Size	No. of Lots	Avg. database FAR	Recommend FAR Less Than	Recommend Sq. Ft. Less Than	Max. Sq. Ft.	Max. FAR
< 6K	3052	0.23	0.37	2200	2400	0.40
6K -6999	1685	0.19	0.34	2400	2600	0.37
7K-7999	1625	0.18	0.33	2600	2990	0.37
8k-8999	1066	0.17	0.33	2970	3330	0.37
9k-9999	936	0.16	0.32	3200	3680	0.37
10k-10999	695	0.16	0.32	3520	4048	0.37
11k-11999	464	0.14	0.3	3600	4140	0.35
12k-12999	335	0.14	0.28	3640	4186	0.32
13k-13999	246	0.14	0.28	3920	4508	0.32
14k-14999	196	0.13	-	-	-	-
15k +	2218	0.08	-	-	-	-